

Better Homes and Centers



Michigan Department of
Social Services

Readiness

Issue 12 Spring 1987

TAKING DEVELOPMENT INTO CONSIDERATION WHEN PLANNING CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS

Anne K. Soderman, Associate Professor
College of Human Ecology
Michigan State University

Developmental programming has become a watchword today in early childhood education. It simply means that educational expectations and activities for children should be carefully matched to their abilities and needs, but there is growing confusion about how to do this. We have become more aware that when we fail — when we underchallenge or overchallenge children — we run the risk of setting them up for failure.

Ideal developmental planning takes into consideration the age of children, their sex, personality differences, learning aptitudes and attitudes, any handicapping characteristics, and their experiences outside of school or day care. It may seem an impossible task, but when we observe young children we begin to understand that many preschool and primary children share the same needs. For example, they need to move. They need the active attention of caring adults around them and consistent, confirming reactions from those adults. They need a balance of stimulating and quiet activity, and they need opportunities for self-regulation. They need some space of their own and opportunities to stretch their imaginations through play. They need to develop competence in language, body control, decision making and problem solving, and to experiment with controlling other people and objects.

They learn more from direct experimentation than from being "taught" what is correct. They need to feel safe, to experience success and to develop learning habits that will be helpful to them in the future. They need chances to use materials in a variety of ways in order to relate parts to wholes, to infer causes, and predict the consequences of certain actions on objects — the force of gravity, acceleration, deceleration, momentum. They need to differentiate, to compare, and to classify. They need exposure to other people,

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DIRECTOR'S CORNER

Until recently spanking was not encouraged but was allowed in child care facilities under certain conditions. Numerous child care providers expressed concern to the Department about spanking and advocated positive discipline methods.

Due to concern raised by providers, the Department reviewed the policy. As a result of that review, spanking is no longer allowed in any child care facility under any circumstances.

Even if parents request that providers spank their children, it is not allowed. I would encourage everyone to become familiar with positive means of discipline to assist children in developing self-control and self-esteem.

Past issues of Better Homes and Centers have dealt with this subject. In addition, providers can ask their licensing consultants for suggestions.

Ted deWolf, Director
Division of Child Day Care Licensing

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Take Development Into Consideration . . .

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both big and small, and to other points of view.

Infants are doing almost all of these things when they are picking up Cheerios off their high chair trays as a friendly adult nearby comments every now and then on their success. Four-year-olds who are on their stomachs watching an ant hill at work are also having an appropriate and rewarding educational experience, as is the six-year-old working with classmates on a more structured experience of timing and observing the melting of snow at different temperatures.

In every area of development, children move in sequence. They babble and then talk; they scribble and then draw or write; they quantify (one nose, two legs) and then qualify (bigger, darker, longest), classifying and comparing in terms of shape, size, and color. They hear and then listen; first, they differentiate themselves from others and later begin getting along with others; they are taken care of and dependent and then move toward taking care of themselves and independence; they feel safe only with parents and then learn to trust others. They experience sensations and move gradually toward the more complex processing of information . . . from believing that events are magically caused toward a genuine understanding of how natural phenomena work. While there are many different kinds of instruments to evaluate children's developmental levels and readiness for certain activities, experienced adults can probably do a better job of assessing a match simply by observing children closely.

The quality of children's movement between the fundamental and complex behaviors described above depends first of all on how well their survival needs (food, warmth, etc.) are being met. When basic needs are not being adequately met, meeting them will dominate all other striving by a child and interfere with overall development. Thus, for the hungry child, including breakfast becomes the most important aspect of educational planning. An adult who plans for more than just intellectual development helps children appreciate the widening world around them, understand themselves and others and explore new concepts through all learning avenues: their senses, communication with others, construction and reconstruction of materials, pretend play, and physical action.

When adults are impatient with the developmental capabilities of young children or fail to respect the ways in which they *prefer* to learn, educational programming can hardly be described as developmental. Rather, it becomes detrimental. The consequences of this can be seen in the number of children who find little but boredom or frustration in some educational settings. In such programs, children are expected to perform tasks better suited to younger or older children. Their concentration or play is constantly interrupted by an adult who spots an opportunity to "teach" them something. They rarely have any opportunity to decide

anything about what happens in the setting or to them; rather, adults do all of the planning. Children in these settings have few chances to work out difficulties with other children because an adult steps in quickly to "maintain calm." Children find that making a mistake is pretty costly in terms of self esteem or safety, since adults are punitive, sarcastic, and harsh in reacting to any inappropriate behavior. There are few chances to develop social skills because prosocial behaviors are rarely modeled by adults, talked about in friendly, nonthreatening group situations, or experienced through such avenues as books, puppet play, and music.

True developmental programming is child-centered programming that respects the raw potential of young children. It requires the planner to have an in-depth knowledge of child development and the ability to structure an environment for children that is geared to their needs.

Developmental programming sounds great on paper. We hope we will find a way to make it a reality wherever we find young children.

WHAT'S THE RUSH?

Stanley Roth, Supervisor

Child Day Care Licensing, Grand Rapids

In this era of the hurried child, these ideas may be particularly helpful with young children. However, they may be adapted to any age:

- Limit the amount of your time outside the home.
- Take a moment each day for a family hug.
- Reduce the amount of time your children spend watching television.
- Sit and watch a favorite TV program or cartoons with your children when they do watch TV.
- Read lots of stories together.
- Look your children directly in the eyes when communicating. Talk and listen to, not at one another. Actively listen to your children.
- Sit on the floor awhile each day and *play* with your children.
- Let your children help with cooking or baking or laundry at home.
- Hold your children: put your arms around their shoulders.
- Give children time to complete their play or project before rushing off to do errands.
- Take time to explain errands: include children in the planning, let the children pack a tote for entertainment when traveling, or take along a couple of books.
- "Waste" time together with your children. This is not a goal or achievement oriented time. No product is necessary. Just be together.
- Ask yourself everyday, "What's the rush?"

LIKE WHEAT GERM AND LAMAZE

Stephanie Riley
Lowry Center, Oakland University

What is developmental age?

Developmental age is a clustering of behaviors in a child. It gives us the unity of where that child is, with regard to what will be expected of him in the next school environment. Rather than simply seeing the child in terms of cognitive knowledge, chronological age, or academic achievement, it tells us where the child is *now* in his maturation. To see the clustering, one needs to know about the four areas of growth and development; intellectual, physical, social, and emotional growth.

Particularly with children entering kindergarten, this is a crucial consideration. Can they adapt to that new environment?

How can you as a teacher determine developmental ages?

Observation is your most powerful asset. Watch children's body movements, their stress level, their social interactions, their adaptability to a new task, their visual and auditory recall, the physical appearance, language development, and concentration span. These are all areas which are crucial for you to know about before recommending kindergarten placement for children. Let's take each of the above areas and give examples of things you could be seeing.

1. **Body Movements:** Is the body moving naturally? Has the run become well established, negotiating corners well, hopping on one foot? Where are the child's hands? Is balance good? Does the child avoid gross motor activities?
2. **Stress Level:** Is the tongue out and sweeping back and forth when doing pencil/paper tasks? Does the child breathe heavily or even bring on an asthma attack if asked to do something beyond his abilities?
3. **Social Development:** Is the child now involved in group games and dramatic play? Even a shy child will play in a parallel fashion to be near the group. Is the child only an onlooker or can he be enticed to participate? Leader or follower?
4. **Adaptability:** This is the key to all school successes and failures. Given a *new* task, can the child adapt to it? In every area your observations will tell you. Will the child use a new pitcher of juice? If you change an obstacle course, can he renegotiate it? Will he finger paint with shaving cream?
5. **Visual and Auditory Recall:** Does the child remember the sequence and meaning of a story read a week ago? Does he remember who came for Christmas or what Halloween is all about? Can he remember what the old swing set looked like?

6. **Physical Appearance:** Is the child pale and lethargic? Is his nose always running? Is there spontaneity? Physical problems account for many young qualities in children. Always check possibilities of physical problems first. Visual perception problems and allergies are two big deterrents that many people miss.
7. **Language:** How is the articulation of the child? Is the child still using phrases like "Me do it?"
8. **Concentration Span:** No need to elaborate here! Can the child sit for a 15 minute story or music time? Can he last for a short table game? Can he finish his lunch without walking around?

These are all everyday areas which will give you a good basis for recommendation.

Excerpted from *The Beacon*, Michigan Association for the Education of Young Children, April, 1980.



Correction: Winter 1987 Issue, Health and Safety II. The author of the article, "Head Lice" was incorrectly announced as Hilde Weems, Supervisor, Ingham County. Brian Baumgart, Family Day Care Licensing Consultant, Ingham County is the author. We are sorry Brian.

WHEN BABY LEAVES HOME

*Ann Blevins Rush
Family/Infant-Toddler Learning Program
Michigan State University*

The toddler who has been cared for individually may find the transition to a group care program difficult. A new environment with unfamiliar faces, different furniture and equipment, different schedules and different toys can be very unsettling. Caregivers and parents working together can help to make this transition to a new care situation easier for the toddler.

Initial contacts should include a visit by the parents to observe the group program. Parents and caregivers should discuss policies, procedures and expectations of each other so that each feels comfortable before their toddler begins in the program. If parents and caregivers feel secure about the arrangement, they will probably be more relaxed and better able to help the toddler through the transition.

An information sheet which provides knowledge about the toddler's background will help the caregiver to be more sensitive to the child's individual needs. The information provided should include things such as nicknames; whether the child lives at home with both parents or one parent; siblings' ages and names; family pets; names of other people living in the home besides the immediate family; feeding information (likes and

to the caregivers about the child or the family will remain confidential.

In a program where there is more than one caregiver, it is best to designate a principal caregiver to each toddler. This arrangement will help the child adapt more easily to the new situation. This principal caregiver will also become an "expert" on the designated toddler, capable of sharing information with the parents each day. A group size of no more than eight to ten toddlers facilitates the toddlers getting to know each other more easily. Consistency of caregivers and daily routines is important.

Whenever possible, the toddler should first be brought to the new care situation for a short time with a parent or other familiar person. It is helpful for the parent to tell the child, in simple words, what to expect — the caregiver's name; things the child will be doing during the day (play, eat, sleep). The first visit should take place during a time when the caregiver is least busy. This time may then gradually be lengthened to a full day. The length of time which the parent stays can gradually be tapered off as the toddler and caregiver begin to feel more comfortable with each other.

The toddler may show some changes in behavior such as distress or aggression as a result of being in a new situation without the parent. Given time to "warm-up" to the new situation and the new caregiver, the toddler will adjust more easily. Observation is a form of participation. The child will begin to actively participate as the situation becomes more familiar. Warm gentle support and encouragement from the caregiver is better than forced participation. It may take a few weeks for the toddler to adjust. Before leaving each day, it is important that the parents say good-bye and assure the child that they will return. Short good-byes are best. Long, drawn-out departures may cause more distress for the child and feelings of guilt for the parents.

A "security bag" can be helpful when a toddler is making the transition to a group situation. This "security bag" should include favorite items which will help the child feel more comfortable — a stuffed animal, a blanket, a pacifier, a book, a toy, a laminated picture of family members.

Establishing and maintaining communications between the caregiver and parents will aid in providing continuity for the child. As a result, the child will feel more comfortable and benefit more from the experience. A caregiving program in which parents and caregivers work together is one that will help toddlers make the easiest transition from individual care to group care.



dislikes); sleeping habits and special ways to help the child go to sleep; favorite toys and activities; health information; and any other information the parents believe might be helpful for the caregiver to know. The parents should be assured that any information given

HELPING CHILDREN MAKE TRANSITION FROM CHILD CARE PROGRAMS TO KINDERGARTEN

Miriam Swiegar, Early Elementary Supervisor
School District of City of Saginaw

When faced with leaving their child care program to attend kindergarten, children experience a variety of emotions ranging from sheer delight to eager anticipation to debilitating worry and depression. Most children impatiently await the day they are finally ready to attend elementary school. At the same time, they feel anxious about leaving the environment, friends and adults they know and love.

Providers and parents who are aware of the necessity to carefully plan the smooth entry of young children into an early childhood program, must also commit themselves to creatively plan for the end-of-the-year period. The individual effects of separation from early childhood programs will be as different as the families who participate in those programs. The consequences of the separation will depend on the reason for separating, the care during the separation, the child's age and maturity, and the quality of family relationships.

How can providers and parents help ease this important transition for children? As children develop, they experience new feelings. Adults help when they express similar feelings and model appropriate ways of handling bewildering emotions. Take time to listen to the worries and fears of children. Just to know that an adult cares can be comforting. As you respond in an understanding manner, take the opportunity to gradually provide new information about what kindergarten will be like. You are building pleasurable images within the children which will help make the new situation more appealing.

Children move to kindergarten as a natural result of growing up. Take frequent snapshots and talk about the changes that have occurred over time. Note physical changes, identify new skills, jog memories on what used to be, always emphasizing the maturation that has taken place. Encourage the children to express their understanding of growth changes, and in so doing, help them to know themselves better.

Plan a visit to the new classroom, if possible. Having the opportunity to actually see the building, the classroom, and its facilities, along with meeting some of the staff, may be the concrete evidence needed to help alleviate undue concern over what's next. Even if you can't tour the inside of the new school, drive by,

find the playground or other points of interest and invite conversation and questions.

Finally, adults can ease the transition by including future-oriented learning activities during the closing days in child care. Discuss what next year might be like and which children will be in kindergarten together. Exchange plans and feelings with both parents and children. Allow the children opportunities to role play leaving child care, acting out their thoughts, fears and anticipations. Read any appropriate books about leaving child care. Provide some treasures accumulated over the year, such as photos or individually made books, to be taken home as lasting mementos of the good times shared.

Children's earliest experiences color their lifelong view of themselves and exercise powerful influences over their lives. How children handle separation is no exception, as it is closely tied in with their view of themselves. If the current child care experience is one in which children are valued and respected, thereby building feelings of self-worth and confidence, future changes can be experienced with greater ease. Our efforts will be rewarded when, come September, happy, confident children fill the kindergarten classrooms.

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EDITORIAL STAFF

Tina Marks	Home Licensing Consultant
Sue Young	Home Licensing Consultant
Sandra Settergren	Home Licensing Consultant
Carole Grates	Center Licensing Consultant
Patricia Hearron	Center Licensing Consultant
Judy Levine	Supervisor
Diane Einiks	Illustrator

GROWING PAINS

*Pamela Eaton-Champion
Owner/Director Pam's Preschool Program
Ingham County*

Being in day care, working and playing with young children, has been a part of me for as long as I can remember — starting as an older child role-playing teacher with younger children and then moving on to babysitting as a teenager. I spent my undergraduate and graduate years employed at one center or another serving in a variety of positions. From time to time I was asked to care for children in my home when a center closed for vacations. I was involved in some really good child care settings and some really not so good settings. Whatever the environment, I learned a lot. From it all I was able to develop my own philosophy on what good child care programming was all about. My experiences led me to believe that a really good child care facility must somehow be profitable for everyone involved.

For almost as long as I have worked with young children I have had dreams of owning my own preschool program. I never really set up a time table or made any detailed plans. I wasn't even sure if I could or would make this happen. I just had a dream.

Real possibilities of my dream coming true began when the center I was working at closed. A few parents asked me to babysit. I consented to care for their children as long as they didn't call me a babysitter. The word "babysitter," to me, seemed so unimportant. Everyone thinks of the babysitter as the one who feeds the children, keeps them safe and makes sure they've had their nap. For the most part, a babysitter watches T.V. interacting with the children only during commercials. I didn't want to be a babysitter and it was important to me that the parents didn't perceive me as such.

I wrote up a Parent/Provider Agreement and went over all details with each parent making sure they understood what to expect from me and what was expected of them. Having a written agreement between the parent and myself proved to be very valuable. It was an excellent way to communicate my policies concerning payment, illness, discipline, etc. I found it to be a good way to project a professional image and begin a positive relationship with a parent.

I was now responsible for the care of six children in my small two bedroom townhouse and I had very little equipment to work with. The children were all from low income families mostly headed by a single female. Because of the parents' financial situation, my weekly income was minimal, forcing me to work nights as a waitress. This situation was workable for a while but I knew I couldn't continue at this pace. It was unfair to me and the children. I seriously considered getting out of the home caregiver business all together. After all, I didn't even have any medical benefits. Somehow I

decided to hang in there.

Determined to make things work out, I accidentally stumbled onto some information. I was told of a city program soon to offer assistance to low income families to help pay for child care. Payments became more prompt and because of a less stressful parent I worked with a happier more well adjusted child. Having knowledge of resources for families has been one of the most important tools for me in succeeding at operating a day care program. It has been crucial for me to be aware and involved in community child care agencies and organizations. They often possess a wealth of information that one can pass on. I discovered that financial assistance isn't the only form of help. There are a variety of organizations, public and private, offering a variety of services. Whatever the parent's need; if I knew of a way to help take pressure off the parent, it in turn helped me.

As a good family home provider, offering a stimulating learning environment, I soon had more requests to care for children than my registration allowed and I had to put children on a waiting list. Getting a license to care for six more children was the next step to take. Where to put six more children was the issue. To be licensed for twelve children I had to meet the space requirements. My husband and I decided to move all our furniture in one bedroom and live in the other, leaving the entire main floor and basement for the children. A friend of mine knew of someone in need of a job so I asked this person to be my assistant.

These were my two big mistakes in the transition from family home to group home. The first was not allowing enough space for my husband and me to comfortably relax. Since then, making every effort to ensure my family's comfort and privacy has been essential to our sharing space with the group home children. The second biggest mistake I've ever made as a home provider was hiring someone just because she needed a job. Now I always try to choose a caregiver who shares my philosophy and has the background to meet children's needs.

One mistake I didn't make was missing bargains on top quality equipment. Going through early childhood catalogs and getting familiar with the cost of various items made it easy to know when used items being sold were great deals, good deals, or not deals at all. Public school auctions and day care centers going out of business are excellent places to buy good used, and even new, equipment. Even when I had no room for certain items I'd find some place to store it. Not being afraid to invest in equipment I couldn't immediately use proved to be very beneficial when I finally had the opportunity to do so.

In the summer of 1984 we bought a house. We chose this particular house because of its large fenced in play yard and for its central location in a partly residential, partly business area. Our new home had a large room that we designated just for the day care children leaving the rest of the house for family only. We continued to have requests to care for more children than my license allowed.

In the fall of 1985 my husband and I toyed with the idea of giving up the group home and opening a day



care center. We spent the next four months trying to decide if we were ready to take on the responsibility, not really knowing how great a responsibility it was. We decided to do it in 1986. We were on our way. Transition from group home to day care center was much more complex than the transition from family home to group home.

Our first step was dealing with city planning. They came to our site with all kinds of inspectors. They

followed up with an eight page report of everything that would have to be done to the building before they would give us an approval. It probably would have been easier to tear it down and start from scratch. Then the health department came out and submitted a five page report of their requirements followed by the Fire Marshal. Local zoning and traffic control had their say and the State had their handicap requirements. We took one step at a time. We contacted a few contractors for estimates on what it would all cost. Their answers were much more than we had anticipated. It was now late in the spring and time to make some heavy decisions on whether to continue with our plans or put a hold on things.

We were able to secure a small business loan and found a contractor that we could trust. The road was rough but we made our deadline. At the end of August 1986 we opened for business.

A word of advice to you planning to open your own center: Give yourself plenty of time when making your transition. Waiting for paperwork from various governmental departments really can take longer than you imagine. I also suggest trying to find a building already meeting commercial standards or even build a brand new building. Renovating an older building proved to be a more costly way of doing things.

My preschool program is now operating at full capacity and is my dream come true. It has been hard work and it still is hard work. But believe me it has all been worthwhile. Hang in there!!!

DAY CARE IS A FAMILY BUSINESS

*Kathy Brown, Family Day Care Provider
Ingham County*

Deciding to open a family day care home meant a lot of changes for my family. We had just built a new home so my husband was faced with more wear and tear on the house. We had decided the supper hour was our most important time of the day so I had to limit my hours to 4:30 p.m. That meant opening up at 6:00 a.m. and sharing breakfast time with our new friends.

Having someone to share her school bus ride excited my 5 year old and she didn't seem to mind sharing me after school. Her only concern was that her room and possessions were off limits unless she wanted to share them.

My main concern was my two year old daughter Heather. She was a typical two year old, very possessive and unwilling to share. No amount of begging, pleading or cajoling could pry a toy out of her grasp.

We sat down and chose the word "private" to be a tool we would use to set boundaries. We decided the girls' room was private and they picked out the toys they wanted to remain private. The rest were donated

to the day care. I carried this one step further and the day care children also have the option of sharing their toys or putting them in a private place.

Next we set up a downstairs bedroom we had christened the "toy room." We started by putting large pillows and a basket of books in one corner for reading or quiet time. A kitchen set, table, chairs and dishes went to another corner for playing house. In the third corner we put a jogging trampoline, an exercise mat, and a bag of leotards for developing large motor skills. The closet was divided by shelves and we stored the building toys, art supplies, and games inside. Toddlers have a natural "dumping syndrome." To cut down on work and frustration, we decided to keep these items out of sight.

We added a few rules, some warmth and love, and welcomed our new friends into our home. Letting the girls contribute ideas helped them feel they were an important part of Mom's business. If the truth were to be known, I couldn't do it without the support and cooperation of my family.

PROVIDER'S CORNER

Please share this information with the children's parents.



Children Required to have Social Security Numbers

Roger W. Seamon, District Manager
Social Security

The Tax Reform Act of 1986 requires taxpayers to show a Social Security number for each dependent age 5 and older that they claim for tax purposes beginning with returns filed in 1988 and later. The provision is designed to reduce tax evasion in cases where parents filing separate returns both claim the same dependent for tax purposes. This is a growing area of revenue loss, according to Internal Revenue Service officials.

It is estimated that over 9 million dependents will have to be issued Social Security numbers so their parents can comply with this new law. Those who now have a number *will not* have to get another one. Applications for Social Security numbers should be submitted as soon as possible to avoid an expected crush of applications late in 1987 and early in 1988.

Forms are available at many financial institutions, most U.S. Post Offices, and local Social Security offices. Parents may apply for a Social Security card for their children by telephone, mail, or in person.

Resources — Readiness

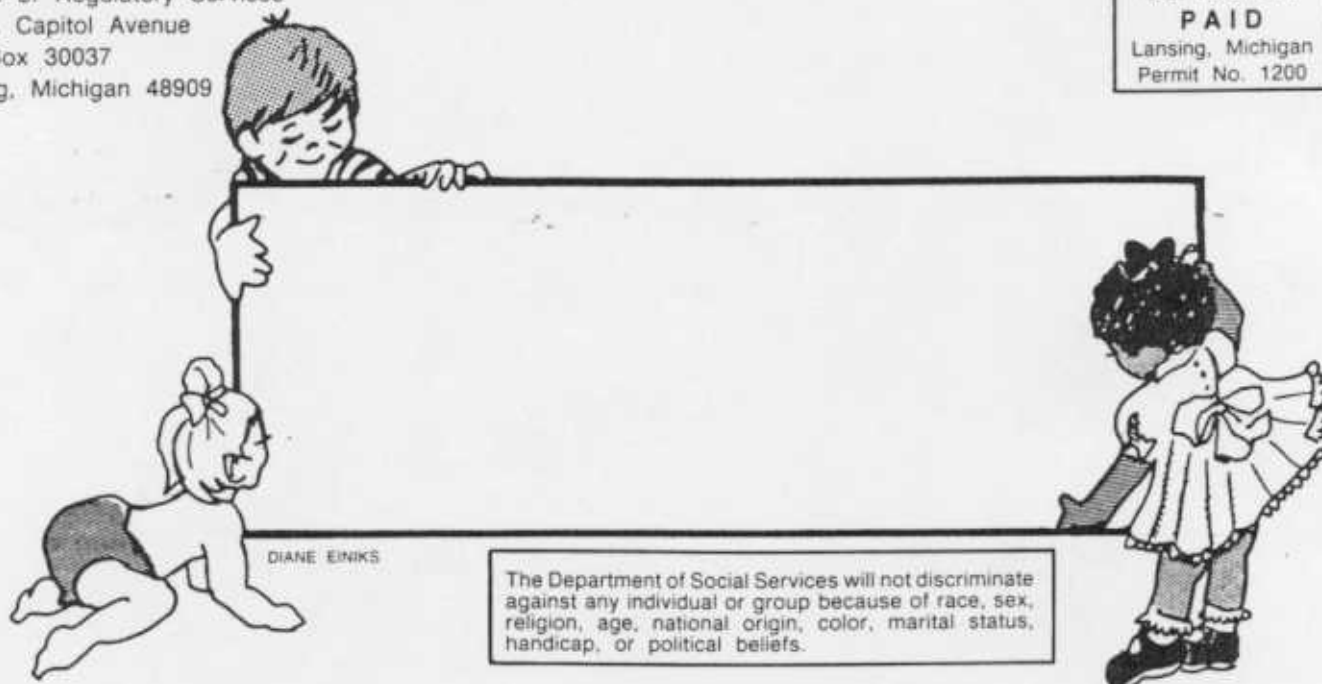
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